

ACT NO. 7172

BILL NO. 28-0194

TWENTY-EIGHT LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2010

An Act honoring and commending Brigadier General Charles F. Blair posthumously, and naming the Sea Plane Terminal in St. Thomas, "The Charles Blair Sea Plane Terminal"

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WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair was born on July 19, 1909, in Buffalo, New York; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair learned the art of Aviation at the Ryan Flying School in San Diego, California and soloed there in 1928 at the age of 19; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair earned a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Vermont in 1931; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair entered the Naval Flying School at Pensacola, Florida and graduated in 1932, with a Naval Aviator designation #4748 and the rank of Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair, after being commissioned Ensign was assigned to Patrol Squadron VP-7F, Naval Air Station, North Island, San Diego, California; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair was released from active duty in the Navy in 1933; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair, after his release from the Navy, flew for seven years with United Airlines, pioneering mail routes in the rugged United States West; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair in 1940 was named chief pilot of a newly formed overseas airline, American Export Airlines, which later became American Overseas Airlines; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair commanded all of American Overseas Airlines survey flights and the first scheduled flights between the United States and the British Isles, Africa and South America, as well as the first nonstop commercial flight across the Atlantic, which he made in a Sikorsky VS-44 flying boat, and he was responsible for hiring and training all of the airlines pilots; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair, during World War II flew for the Naval Air Transport, Air Transport Command and as production test pilot for the Grumman Aircraft Company, testing the F6F, F7F and the F8F Navy Fighters; he also flew the original Martin Mars Flying Boat as consulting test pilot; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair in 1943 proposed and flew the first North Atlantic winter airline operations nonstop between the United States and British Isles in a VS-44; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair in 1944 was pilot in command of the five fastest seaplane crossings of the Atlantic on five consecutive trips, with a best time of 14 hours and 17 minutes; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair, after the War commanded the first scheduled flights of Lockheed Constellations and Boeing Stratocruisers on the transatlantic routes of American Overseas Airlines and in his spare time owned and operated Associated Air Transport, Inc., a small non-scheduled airline flying between New York and Europe, the Middle East and South America, which he sold after 16 million uneventful passenger miles; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair became a PAN AM pilot when AOA merged with Pan American World Airways in 1950; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair in 1950 purchase a P-51 Mustang fighter, modified it and flew nonstop from New York to London's Heathrow Airport at an average speed of 446 miles per hour, making the flight in 7 hours and 48 minutes, a record that still stands for such a flight in a piston engine plane; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair made the first solo flight over the Arctic and the North Pole in a single engine aircraft on a flight which took 10 hours and 27 minutes over 3,260 miles, and in which he dropped a letter over the pole addressed to Santa Clause on behalf of his son, Chris, and drawing the attention of the White House and President Harry S. Truman, who awarded him the coveted Harmon International Aviation Award as the world's outstanding aviator, and he was further honored with the Gold Medal of the Norwegian Aero Club, only the 16th time in 43 years anyone had been so honored; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair was commissioned Colonel in the Air Force Reserve in April 1953 and was promoted to Brigadier General in July 1959; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair flew most of the Air Force's first-line aircraft, making numerous supersonic and Mach 2 flights and tested the GAR-8 and GAR-10 missiles and commanded three F84F tactical fighters in the first nonstop flight of jet fighters across the Atlantic using the Great Circle Route; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair while being one of the most accomplished aviators was also the writer of "Red Ball in the Sky" published by Random House and "Thunder Above", which he co-authored with A.J. Wallis and which was made into a motion picture in England; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair married Maureen O'Hara in 1968, and together they formed the Antilles Air Boats, then the world's biggest commuter seaplane airline, which offered flights between St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John, Tortola and Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair met his untimely death on September 2, 1978 while piloting one of his Grumman Goose Seaplanes en route to St. Thomas; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair left behind a wife, Maureen O'Hara, and four children from two previous relationships; and

WHEREAS, Charles F. Blair's accomplishments and contributions as an aviator, as a military veteran and as a businessman were mammoth; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, honors and commends the late Charles F. Blair posthumously for his dedicated and outstanding service to our community in the field of aviation and air travel by providing a commuter seaplane airline service between the Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

SECTION 2. In honor of Charles F. Blair, for his outstanding accomplishments as an aviator, veteran and businessman and as a pioneer in aviation, the Seaplane Terminal located on Veterans Drive on the island of St. Thomas is named "The Charles F. Blair Seaplane Terminal".

SECTION 3. The Virgin Islands Port Authority shall erect and maintain a sign at the entrance of the sea terminal containing the inscription, "The Charles F. Blair Seaplane Terminal".

SECTION 4: The President or the President's designee shall present to the family of Charles F. Blair a perma plaque copy of this Act at an appropriate ceremony.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on April 15, 2010.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 27 Day of April, A.D., 2010.

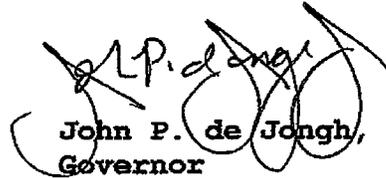


Louis Patrick Hill
Louis Patrick Hill
President
Sammuel Sanes
Sammuel Sanes
Legislative Secretary



Bill No. 28-0194 is hereby approved.

Witness my hand and the Seal of the
Government of the United States
Virgin Islands at Charlotte Amalie,
St. Thomas, this 10th day of May,
A.D., 2010.


John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor